



Nordic Affect
Clockworking

CLOCKWORKING | Nordic Affect

1. **CLOCKWORKING** | 7:37
María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir
violin, viola, cello, electronics
2. **2 CIRCLES** | 5:20
Hildur Guðnadóttir
violin
3. **FROM BEACON TO BEACON** | 5:43
Hafdís Bjarnadóttir
violin, cello, harpsichord, electronics
4. **INNI – MUSICA DA CAMERA** | 8:09
Thurídur Jónsdóttir
violin, electronics
5. **SHADES OF SILENCE** | 7:34
Anna Thorvaldsdóttir
violin, viola, cello, harpsichord
6. **SLEEPING PENDULUM** | 10:06
María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir
violin, electronics

Total time: 44:31

For me, contact is where inclusion begins.
Ólafur Elíasson

In h a l a t i o n – e x h a l a t i o n. These words grace the final notes of Anna Thorvaldsdóttir's "**Shades of Silence**". By this point the musicians have journeyed through the work's sonic structure and are realigned within its pulsation. And then; the concensus of breath. In Anna's words the piece is an inwards and outwards escape to the subtle nuances of silence. f l o w

I first met Anna in San Diego where she was completing her doctorate. It was fascinating to step into her creative space where sketches of works lined the walls and after an afternoon of discussions and listening to music I was resolved to commission a work for Nordic Affect. That afternoon encapsulates to an extent the process that takes place when an ensemble or person commissions a work. You step into each other's creative

spheres and connect. At the core of each of the commissions on this album was the desire to explore the possibilities of our instruments within a 21st century aesthetic while at the same time creating our own. Anna, Hafdís, Hildur, María Huld and Thurídur took us on a rewarding journey which included experiments with timbre and pulse, spatial and temporal musings mixed with technological explorations, in effect: an inwards and outwards excursion.

s p a c e

The intimacy of Anna's world of sound easily connects with the aesthetics of Thurídur Jónsdóttir's music. Her work is defined by a specific preparatory thought process, which in the end shapes the direction of the composition. This process is apparent to her collaborators; when working with Thurídur you enter an elaborate and complex creative universe. In recent years she has often incorporated electronics into her work and one good example is "Flutter", a concerto for flute, orchestra and field recordings of insects. It was after witnessing Thurídur's ability to build a unity of sound from insects and symphonic instruments that I was prompted to wonder what worlds Thurídur would uncover when it came to my baroque violin and bow. The result was "INNI – musica da camera" which, according to Thurídur "...weaves the subtle and fragile harmonics of the baroque violin with a soundscape made of an infant's murmur". We are

invited into an intimate soundscape, which is underlined even further by the word INNI, meaning 'inside' in Icelandic, a word that encompasses the spatial excursion of the work into various 'chambers of sound'.

s o u n d

Spatial exploration is very much featured in Hildur Guðnadóttir's work, perhaps unsurprisingly given her fascination with acoustics and movement of sound. I first got to know Hildur's work through her performance with the band Múm on *Go Go Smear the Poison Ivy*. Around the same time her solo career took off and I watched in fascination how she combined composition, technical know-how and performance. Hildur herself views her work "2 circles" as a part of an ongoing observation of the relationship between a musician and his instrument, where one person becomes two sound sources. The work falls in line with her own performance in recent years, which can be heard on the Touch label as well as in her development together with luthier Hans Jóhannsson of the Ómar, an instrument described by Hildur as an electroacoustic, surround-sound cello gamba. We worked together on "2 circles" during a wintry period in Iceland where I could almost have skated between my place and her studio. The sessions spanned conversations and experiments with sound production, both instrumental and vocal, a journey into ones embodiment.

At the heart of composer and electronic guitarist Hafþís Bjarnadóttir's output is a quality that I imagine is present in the workshop of every inventor, that of endless curiosity. Hafþís is an avid collector of field recordings and has in that capacity released an album of nature sounds from Iceland in addition to two solo albums. I heard her music for the first time in 2009, in the work "Krónan", based on financial graphs and charts where the musician's performance involved tossing coins into an old coffee pot. As we started conversations about a work for Nordic Affect it turned out she had been gathering field recordings with a specific composition in mind. The result, "**From Beacon to Beacon**", was premiered in Copenhagen. The work is designed as a 'conversation' between two lighthouses and the instrumental parts are based on her transformation of weather forecast for the Garðskagaviti lighthouse into music. The electronic sounds were recorded by Hafþís outside the Garðskagaviti lighthouse in wintertime and inside the Galtarviti lighthouse in mid-summer. "From Beacon to Beacon" therefore reflects according to her "...the vagaries of the Icelandic weather – storms have a beauty of their own that can bring calmness despite howling winds and unruly seas."

Some years ago I became aware of María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir's work through the indie band amiina, founded by four girls with backgrounds in classical music who created their own wonderfully fragile and sensitive sound world where past and present collide. These influences can be detected in María Huld's works on this album, a study in how the music of 21st century can incorporate a myriad of references which fluctuate like a pendulum between then and now, be it through usage of medium, rhythmic repetition or recycling of tonal material. "**Sleeping Pendulum**" received premiere in 2010 on an icy cold April day in the East fiords of Iceland after an inspirational flight, just north of the ash cloud of Eyjafjallajökull. The collaboration however began in her home studio in Reykjavík as the electronic part is based on my performance, some of it in *scordatura* tunings. The live violin part is weaved into it, sometimes strict in style, sometimes free, bringing to mind the imaginative 17th century *stylus phantasticus*. "Sleeping Pendulum" went on to receive honorary recommendations in 2012 at the International Rostrum of Composers. At that time we'd already decided to continue our collaboration, which resulted in "**Clockworking**", created for Nordic Affect's show *Sound and Vision* at Iceland Airwaves. Both works can be termed a study in rhythmical repetition. But "Clockworking" can also be seen as an encounter of the human and the machine. The music draws on an old work

song, remains of a time before the industrial revolution where rhythmical repetitions permeated life, be it through chopping of wood, making of butter or spinning of yarn. And sometimes the repetitions of hand movement became an accompaniment to rhymes or songs. "Clockworking" is therefore a testament both to the human and the mechanical; the work song which was once held together by manual movement is incorporated into a work where the musicians' varied rhythmical values resemble the different size of wheels required to keep a clockwork going.

t o u c h

Clockworking, inhaling, exhaling; through music we immerse ourselves in creativity. We find moments of community and of individuality as we shape sounds from gut and wood. We encounter new spaces and interact with technology, which in turn affects how we play. We meet listeners with whom we connect and at times it feels as though we're breathing as one.

it's connection :: it's music :: it's life

— Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir







Nordic Affect have been hailed for their “affectionate explorations” (BBC Music Magazine) and “commitment to their repertoire” (Classical Music). Recently described as a “gem in Iceland’s musical life” by critic Jónas Sen, Nordic Affect have created a highly unique voice, which has earned them international recognition. In 2013 they were nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize and in the following year they were named Performer of the Year at the Iceland Music Awards.

Nordic Affect is a group of period instrument musicians who are united in their passion for viewing familiar musical forms from a different perspective and for venturing into new musical terrain. Its members have individually performed and recorded with artists and groups such as Jóhann Jóhannsson, The English Concert, Concerto Copenhagen, Anima Eterna Brugge, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées and Björk.

The commissioning and performance of new works is integral to Nordic Affect’s mission as they have, from the group’s inception, combined new compositions with the music of the 17th and 18th centuries. Since their debut in 2005, Nordic Affect have performed to critical acclaim at festivals such as TRANSIT festival (BE), Dark Music Days (IS), November Music (NL), BRQ Vantaa Festival (FI), Skálholt Summer Concerts (IS), Copenhagen Renaissance Festival (DK) and Iceland Airwaves (IS). Their performances can be found on the Deutsche Grammophon, Bad Taste Records, Musmap and Brilliant Classics labels and have received glowing reviews in the international press alongside the Kraumur Award and Iceland Music Awards.

The artistic director of Nordic Affect since its foundation has been Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir.



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Graphic Design: Caleb Nei

Credits

María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir – Clockworking (2013) for violin, viola, cello & electronics*.
Editing Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir, María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir & Silli Geirdal. Premix María
Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir & Silli Geirdal.

Hildur Guðnadóttir – 2 circles (2013) for violin & voice. Editing Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir &
Hildur Guðnadóttir.

Hafdís Bjarnadóttir – From Beacon to Beacon (2011) for violin, cello, harpsichord & electronics.
Editing Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir & Hafdís Bjarnadóttir. Premix Hafdís Bjarnadóttir.

Thuríður Jónsdóttir – INNI – musica da camera (2013) for violin & electronics. Editing Halla
Steinunn Stefánsdóttir & Thuríður Jónsdóttir.

Anna Thorvaldsdóttir – Shades of Silence (2012) for violin, viola, cello & harpsichord. Editing
& premix Anna Thorvaldsdóttir.

María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir – Sleeping Pendulum (2010) for violin & electronics**. Editing
Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir, María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir & Silli Geirdal. Premix María Huld
Markan Sigfúsdóttir & Silli Geirdal.

*performance & recording of electronic part María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir. Mixing &
mastering Alex Somers.

**recording & mixing of electronics María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir.

Recorded at RÚV Studios by Georg Magnússon. Final mix & mastering Valgeir Sigurðsson
(Greenhouse Studios).



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Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir *violin*
Guðrún Hrund Harðardóttir *viola*
Hanna Loftsdóttir *cello*
Guðrún Óskarsdóttir *harpsichord*